

ITMC 2015 Project Excellence Awards

Project Title: Reduce the threat from USB Storage Devices

Agency: Commerce

Nominated by: Larry Krause

Team Leader/ Members: Doug Mitchell / Larry Krause

Summary Paragraph: Commerce became keenly aware of the security threat that is present in the common use of USB Storage Devices. Once this threat was known and researched, it was determined that we could and would revise how we operate to reduce and/or eliminate all USB storage use in our environment. Commerce years ago implemented policy for restricting Administrator Rights on Windows based workstations and laptops, so this change further strengthened our general computer security stance.

Project Description: We researched how we could implement a method of restricting USB storage devices in both our Windows and Apple based devices. Ultimately a Group Policy Object was developed in Active Directory for the Windows based devices, and an Administrator only configuration revision was implemented for the Apple devices.

This operating policy revision generated a great deal of concern from user population and we provided a month long education / discussion period to allow all concerns to be heard. We did grant a 'few' (very few) exceptions to this policy, and we have developed some work around processes for some exceptional cases. Although not perfectly implemented, we estimate that USB storage device usage within our environment has been reduced by 98%. As all our devices are restricted to change by only our administrator accounts, we feel this change has closed a huge hole in our security profile.

This policy would not have been possible without the vision, support and leadership of our Deputy Director Doug Mitchell.